



Nonviolence Trainings

And the Campaign to Stop the School of the Americas



Demonstration at the School of the Americas in 2007

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their co-worker and her teenage daughter were massacred in El Salvador. A U.S. Congressional Task Force verified that those responsible were trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Columbus, Georgia, USA. This is only the most notorious incident in the school's history of providing special training to Latin American military personnel known to have committed atrocities and engaged in torture.

In 1990 Father Roy Bourgeois, who had lived for many years in Latin America, moved into an apartment outside the main gate of Fort Benning and founded the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW). That year 10 people fasted for 35 days outside the gate of Fort Benning. However, from this small beginning, SOA Watch grew quickly, drawing on the knowledge and experience of many in the U.S. who had worked either in Latin America or in solidarity with movements there in the 1970s and '80s.

At the latest Fort Benning demonstration -- on November 23, 2008 -- 20,000 people joined a solemn funeral procession at the Fort's gates commemorating those who suffered and were martyred by the graduates of the School of the Americas. Thousands of people came to Columbus, Georgia for the whole weekend to attend workshops, a Saturday rally, and evening concerts as well as the annual Sunday vigil. Six people were arrested for going into Fort Benning.

Today, the SOA Watch is a large, diverse, grassroots campaign rooted in solidarity with the people of Latin America. Its goal is to close the SOA and to change U.S. foreign policy in Latin America by educating the public, and participating in creative, nonviolent protest, as well as media and legislative work to urge Congress to cut off funds for the training. The last Congressional vote to end funding lost by only 6 votes. With a new Congress and new president, the chances of closing the SOA have improved.

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of The Broken Rifle in electronic format only. For you to receive our quarterly publication you need to subscribe by going to <http://lists.wri-irg.org/sympa/subscribe/thebrokenrifle> or by sending an email to thebrokenrifle-subscribe@lists.wri-irg.org.

This issue of The Broken Rifle is dedicated to the topic of nonviolence training. Nonviolence training has different formats and it answers to different needs. However most trainings have in common that they are a participatory place for learning from each other on the different aspects of nonviolence. It contributes to building healthy group dynamics and explores in a practical way the different aspects of nonviolence. In this BR we look at three cases of trainings -- training for preparing for an action as part of a long term campaign; training on gender and nonviolence; and training for democracy building.

What training do we need? In many ways the most effective form of training is when we train ourselves. We are the ones who understand what is the aim of our work, what is the context where we are based. Training together allows us to develop our skills, remain independent and can guarantee continuity as we share our skills with the rest of the group. Especially in preparing for an action, it's important to understand the limitations of trainings: no matter how many roleplays you do, during an actual action your reaction will never be quite the same as when you are confronted with a violent or an unexpected situation.

In this issue we announce our latest publication the "Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns" a resource to help you dealing with the challenges we face while working in a long term campaign or for a stand alone action.

Javier Gárate



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Work has also taken place in Latin America, with SOAW activists visiting countries to encourage them to withdraw their troops from the school. In February Bolivia became the fifth country after Costa Rica, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela to announce it will no longer send its police or military to be trained in the U.S.

The Pentagon has responded to this pressure with a public relations campaign to give the SOA a new image, renaming it in January 2001 as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). But the campaign continues to call it SOA – “School of Assassins”.

Nonviolence

The campaign to close SOA has always been rooted in a commitment to nonviolence. All who participate in the nonviolent direct action and all who attend the vigils and demonstrations make a commitment to the nonviolence guidelines. The guidelines, which have gone through a process of revision over the years, are distributed to all participants, and are read collectively throughout the annual November demonstrations at Ft. Benning.

In the 1990s hundreds and then thousands engaged in mass nonviolent action by crossing the boundary line and walking onto the base where they were stopped and removed. Preparation consisted simply of a large orientation session. Many were handed ‘ban and bar’ letters, warning them they would be arrested if they returned. Of course, most did return and to prepare for their arrest, there were no direct action preparation meetings for these ‘Second Timers’ along with those planning higher risk actions -- such as hanging banners or planting grave markers on the base. In 2000 about 10,000 people attended the demonstration, 3,600 crossed the line, and of those, 2,100 were given ‘ban and bar’ letters warning them not to return. 26 were put on trial, their sentences ranged from probation to 6 months in federal prison.

After 9/11 (2001) a fence was built around Fort Benning and it was no longer possible for large numbers to walk down the road onto the base. That year 31 were arrested for blocking traffic.

In 2002 three hour nonviolence training sessions were offered for an



Training at SOA, group looking at a picture of Dorthy Day

increasing numbers of people coming to Columbus early to participate in weekend workshops. That year there was a particular struggle prior to the action because the city police set up checkpoints to search demonstrators and their bags. Nonviolence trainings included role plays to prepare people to deal with the process, which included stating “I do not consent to this search.”

A year later, a week before the SOAW demonstration, Miami police attacked ‘anti-globalisation’ protesters, injuring dozens. Many groups attending Miami planned to come to the SOAW protest for the first time. When SOAW lawyers challenged the legality of police searches of protesters, the police convince the judge that this was necessary as so many ‘anarchists’ were coming from the Miami protests. So as people went to the vigil, we distributed armbands with the anarchist symbol – a great sight to see thousands of people, from college students to grey-haired Catholic nuns wearing the anarchist symbol on Fort Benning road. The searches were later ruled unconstitutional and discontinued before the 2004 demonstrations.

Some training participants in 2003 were afraid of those who were coming from Miami, blaming them for the violence with the police and fearing the same in Georgia. This gave the opportunity to discuss police tactics and the real story,

and to help people deal with their fears through role playing and discussion. On the other hand, some of the Miami demonstrators were surprised the police did not attack the SOA demonstrators: from their experience of anti-globalisation demonstrations, they thought police violence was inevitable. They had never participated in a demonstration with non-violent guidelines and a history of nonviolence.

The 2004 Sunday vigil was attended by 16,000, while in 2006 the numbers reached 20,000. This growth is a result of organizing. Fr. Roy speaks around the country and several videos about SOA are being shown. Work has been done to develop allies from unions, Veterans for Peace, colleges, community and religious groups who organise vans, buses and planes to bring people to the weekend of events.

The Role of Trainings

Over the seven years we’ve been doing the Friday nonviolence trainings, we’ve had to take into consideration a number of situations. The police have set up fences, increasingly restricting access to adjacent property. One year Fort Benning blasted “patriotic” music at us, attempting to drown out the speeches and music from our stage. “God Bless Fort Benning Day” has become a counter-



event which has also grown over the past years. Fort Benning has also become a major base for soldiers going to and returning from Iraq, raising local people's opposition to the presence of demonstrators.

Since lots of new folks are coming, the Introductory Nonviolence Training is for people who are new to large demonstrations such as this and who have never participated in a nonviolence training. The agenda includes an exploration of what is meant by nonviolence and nonviolent actions, how we can prepare ourselves to maintain our commitment to nonviolence, an overview of the scenario for the legal action, knowing our rights and understanding the risks and consequences of nonviolent civil disobedience.

Most of those who attend this training are young people who have never been to a demonstration. This poses certain challenges to the trainers. I realised I was making assumptions while facilitating a hassle line when I asked one side to "be yourself at a demonstration" and was told that none of them had ever been at a demonstration. More preparation was needed. We now begin that process by

setting up a potential "hassle" between themselves and someone in their lives who is opposed to them going to the demonstration. We then escalate it from there. It's also a challenge to have only 3 hours with a group that can be 50 or more people, coming with differing needs. Some challenge the very idea of a "hassle", others fear we are not preparing them for the worst. But over the years we have found that this demonstration is as an entry point to the movement for peace and justice for many, the nonviolence trainings are a helpful foundation.

When we noticed that people were coming back to the introductory training the next year, we added a training on Building Skills that includes learning frameworks for developing nonviolent campaigns, and tools to help groups deepen their analysis, identify their allies, and develop effective nonviolent actions so they can continue their work when they go home. A third training option is being planned for next year.

Trainings also take place to prepare people for roles such as Peacekeepers and Legal Observers. For those who engage in civil disobedience, sentences have been from 3 to 6 months. Therefore a strong support system has been created for those considering that risk, to help them through the discernment

process and during and after their time as prisoners.

Nonviolence training and good campaign strategies, along with grassroots organizing, can develop the people power to create a climate and culture that will make the existence of institutions like the SOA/WHINSEC impossible.

Joanne Sheehan

Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns

In January 2009 WRI will launch its latest publication the "Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns".

WRI has been often been asked for material on nonviolence training, or for introductory workshops. And finally decided it was time to produce its own training resource, where we could present an approach to nonviolence based on participatory forms of organising and reflecting what has been learnt from years of international work.

This handbook is envisaged as an introductory resource, though a number of the texts go beyond an introductory level. The idea is that groups starting to work in nonviolence can be inspired from what other groups have done in different parts of the world, learning from the rich history of the nonviolence movement.

The Handbook includes sections on introduction to nonviolence and the history of nonviolent action, how to plan strategic nonviolent campaigns, how to prepare for nonviolent actions, tools for working in groups, the connection between gender and nonviolence, a series of stories from the work in nonviolence from groups all over the world, a long list of practical training exercises, and a list of related resources. A number of these resources were 'road-tested' in early October when the WRI Nonviolence Programme conducted a nonviolence training with Irish activists, hosted by WRI's affiliate INNATE. It was also tested and promoted during WRI's International Nonviolence Training Gathering held in Bilbao, Basque Country. We plan for these resources to be used by grassroots groups around the world.

One of the main challenge for an international organisation is how to produce resources that can manifest its international nature. In this handbook we have tried to incorporate how people work on nonviolence in different contexts, yet still we recognise an Anglo-American dominance. So this handbook is a resource to be adapted to your own context, if you do adapt any section of the handbook please let us know so we can share it with the rest of the WRI network. That is why it has a section Do it Yourself, giving tips on how to produce your own resource.

This handbook was produced in a Wiki - a web system for collaborative editing. It has two version a printed and a web one. We hope to regularly update the web version, which will continue to exist in a Wiki format. You can go on to <http://wri-irg.org/node/3855> and make your own posting. Therefore adaptations of parts of the handbook or variations on particular exercises can still appear there. For WRI what is more important is that the handbook gets used and gets to the streets, so please help us promoting it and distributing it. Please contact the WRI office if you want copies of the Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns.

Gender and Nonviolence

Incorporating a gender perspective in our trainings in nonviolence

This article is the result of material published in the Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns and a session on gender and nonviolence at WRI's International Nonviolence Training Gathering, in Bilbao, Basque Country in October 2008.

It may seem simple and obvious that we want both men and women involved in our struggles against war and injustice. However, if we want to fully utilise people's talents, energy, and insights, we need to apply gender awareness to how we organise ourselves, how we design our campaigns, and how we conduct our trainings for action.

Why? Because gender, our societies' definitions of male and female roles, of masculinity and femininity, influences all of us. And the social traditions that have constructed masculinity as dominant, aggressive, and controlling and femininity as weak, submissive, and serving have deeply affected each of us. Gender awareness helps us to make sure that in our nonviolent actions and campaigns, we don't perpetuate the same injustices we are trying to stop.

In antimilitarist campaigns, gender awareness and gender-based analysis are also valuable tools for creating an effective strategy. Gender is an element in every conflict. It may not be the immediate cause of a conflict, but different ideas of masculinity and femininity are at the heart of why and how people fight. Military systems are built to function on certain ideas and assumptions about male and female roles. To create nonviolent structures and systems for resolving conflict, we will need to create new assumptions and expectations about gender.

Why should peace movements deal with the issue of gender violence?

A gender perspective gives important insights into the work for peace and justice. Ideas about masculinity and femininity lie at the roots of violence and are used to support armed conflicts. The level of violence against women and girls in peacetime is an important indicator about how just and peaceful a society really is. Peace and justice organisations that want to end the violence of war will be more effective if they understand the full spectrum of violence in their society and challenge it.

Survivors of gender violence during war know that reconciliation is impossible

without gender justice. The silence around sexual violence against men and boys during war must also be broken. Peace movements cannot ignore issues related to gender and war, such as the increased militarisation of women, the skills and leadership that women and girls could bring to peace-building, and how gender expectations encourage men to fight.

Why is a gender perspective important in our work?

People who work for social change often assume that we are free from internalised assumptions about gender and thus do not need to learn and change ourselves. Creating awareness and changing ourselves and the dynamics within our organisations on gender issues is an important personal and organisational transformation that in itself acts to dismantle structural violence in the society.

It is difficult to work on gender issues because it is about everyone of us, and we cannot avoid it. Because we are directly affected, we often face fear when the issue is raised. We don't know how to deal with it or don't want to, and we are afraid of more conflict and division. Often it is easier to say that this is not our priority. To encourage ourselves, we can look for examples where other groups and movements have begun to raise these questions.

Why should gender be a part of nonviolence training?

Because women are half of every community and the tasks of peacebuilding are so great, women and men must be partners in the process of peacebuilding and nonviolence struggle.

Because sexism, racism, classism, ethnic and religious discrimination originate from the same set of beliefs that some people are inherently "better" than others, women's empowerment should be seen as inherent to the process of building peace. Like other social structures that set up some people as superior to others, the sexist belief that



Statues exercise at the Nonviolence Training Exchange in Bilbao, 2008.

women's lives are less valuable than men's lives leads to violence against women. When women engage in peacebuilding, they often challenge these sexist beliefs along with other structures that discriminate against people.

Because women are the central caretakers of families in many cultures, everyone suffers when women are oppressed, victimised, and excluded from peacebuilding. Their centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in peacebuilding essential.

Because women have the capacity for both violence and peace, women must be encouraged to use their gifts in building peace.

Because women many times are excluded from public decision-making, leadership, and educational opportunities in many communities around the world, it is important to create special training to empower women to use their gifts in the tasks of building peace.

Because women and men have different experiences of violence and peace, women must be allowed and encouraged to bring their unique insights and gifts to the process of peacebuilding.

Because women have proved all over the world that they are successful peacebuilders, more women need to be encouraged to become involved in



peacebuilding processes as stipulated by the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1325.

List of tools/exercises that you can use for trainings in gender and nonviolence

Names of famous people 10/10 categories

Ask people in a group to offer names for statues in a new park that is huge and will have many important famous people. Politicians, musicians, films actors, etc. Then look at gender balance.

Family dinner

Divide into small groups of 5-6 people. The groups are asked to give a scene from their childhood where all the family members were present. Make a drawing of the scene, where everybody is in the room, what is everyone doing, who has the control. After sharing the scenes, create a discussion on the different roles that different genders played in the scene. Follow up the discussion on de-militarising those scenes.

Messages on being the "right" men / women

Divide the group into men and women, ask them to write in a box all the messages they get from society about

how to be a man or how to be a woman. Each group then is asked to write all the names they will be called if they won't be men and women as they should and also the list of names they will be called if you want to "get out of the box". It is followed up in a discussion about the feelings that came up while writing

The dark room

Possible when you know each other well inside the group. You cover your eyes and choose someone without knowing who it is and give that person a massage all over the body. You switch couples. In the end you talk about not knowing if you are giving the massage to men / women and how did it make you feel, about pleasure and sexuality.

Keep track by speaker/statement

During a meeting one person takes notes on who is talking and what kind of statements is. If a statement is giving an answer or if they are questions and reflections. At the end read it out and try to understand the power structure inside the group.

Fish bowl

A group divides into men and women and have a separate conversation, give them the topic of how gender affects them in their activism. After that do a fish-bowl discussion when one side is talking and

the others can only listen. Note what are the difference and similarities between both groups.

Short film - Socio-drama

Show part of a short film. Stopping it in the middle and playing out what we think the end is going to be. After that watch the end of the film and discuss why do we assumed a specific ending in association to gender roles.

Statues

A man and a woman are being seated in different positions one being in control and the other submissive. The group says what it looks like. What are they thinking, why standing/sitting like that?

Then they switch positions and the group is being asked again.

Bus

Put up chairs as if in a bus and ask people to sit. See the differences between men and women. Then ask people to try and act as the opposite gender



Asking the Right Questions: Nonviolence Training and Gender, Thailand, 2004



Documentation on conscientious objection in the European Union

Published by WRI Council member and MEP Tobias Pflüger

Professional soldiers and the right to conscientious objection in the European Union in November 2008, WRI Council member and MEP Tobias Pflüger published a new publication on "Professional soldiers and the right to conscientious objection in the European Union", based on research of War Resisters' International. The publication provides an overview of the present state of the right to conscientious objection in the European Union. It was produced in close co-operation with War Resisters' International (WRI). It builds on the global survey on the situation of conscientious objectors by War Resisters' International from 1998 and their update by Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) from 2005.

For the first time this publication attempts to systematically also provide information on the right to conscientious objection for contract and professional soldiers. In became clear that on this issue there is a lack of information.

With the trend towards the professionalisation of the military in Europe, another development occurs mainly unnoticed: the right to conscientious objection, which has been widely recognised in the European Union, is being weakened. With the increased use of a professionalised military within the framework of NATO, the EU or the United Nations (or within ad-hoc coalitions), the right to conscientious objection is more important than ever for those soldiers who need it.

The publication is available free of charge from War Resisters' International and the office of Tobias Pflüger MEP. However, there will be a charge for postage and packaging. Please contact the WRI office for more information at info@wri-irg.org.

Training for what?

It is not all about strategies and tactics

With the new electronic format of The Broken Rifle we want to use the opportunity to also get the WRI network using the forums in our re-developed website. This article will be posted on the WRI forum, we invite people to react to it.

Nonviolence training is usually associated with preparing ourselves for our work against oppression - racism, occupation, war, human rights abuses, etc. But also for stimulating the process of building alternatives, in our organisational structures, in our ways of dealing with power, building alternative economic ventures, etc. Nonviolence training is one of the primary ways the nonviolent movement shares its knowledge -- by learning from each other's work and our own expertise. Trainings can increase the impact your group has on others, help you to function better in action and cope better with the risks and problems posed, and expand your action horizons. Basically, nonviolence training helps to create a safe space to test out and develop new ideas or to analyse and evaluate experiences.

In the present, trainings have many different forms. If you have taken part in one, probably it was as preparation for an action, to help you in your campaign development or maybe to introduce you to nonviolence. In this article I want to focus on a specific focus of nonviolence training that has developed through the courses of the years and which has some conflictive dimensions.

It's not all about strategies and tactics

To look at this problem I will focus on two organisations - the International Center for Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) in Washington DC and the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) in Belgrade. The ICNC was founded in 2001 by Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, the authors of *A Force More Powerful*, a far-reaching study of the use of

nonviolent action to bring social change. Its main funder seems to be Peter Ackerman himself. ICNC describes itself as "an independent, nonprofit educational foundation that develops and encourages the study and use of civilian-based, nonmilitary strategies to establish and defend human rights, democracy and justice worldwide". It has three main areas of work to promote nonviolence:

- to educate the general public;
- to influence policies and media coverage and
- to educate activists.

Its training comes up as part of the work of educating activists. They provide on request support for workshops in nonviolent conflict.

For a number of years ICNC has worked in close cooperation with trainers who came from OTPOR, the most dynamic group in the movement that brought down Slobodan Milošević. This group of trainers formed the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS). Their vision is a "world free of violence, with every single political conflict solved by nonviolent struggle... CANVAS trainers and consultants support nonviolent democratic movements through transfer of knowledge on strategies and tactics of nonviolent struggle. CANVAS Supporting Active Network in four countries advocates and promotes battles for democracy worldwide".

The main aim of these organisations is to bring democracy through nonviolent means all over the world. Democracy in terms of right to elections, freedom of speech, human rights



OTPOR action in Serbia



and in some cases also freedom of market. Both organisations say that their agenda is not political, only pro-democracy and for human rights. But at the same time the main movements they use as an example for their model are the so-called 'colour revolutions' in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine. In these people power struggles, there were clear plans on how to get rid of undoubtedly corrupt regimes, but when it was time to build the new society, the new power-holders have not turned out to be model democrats. Indeed in Ukraine, one faction of Pora - the youth group active in the 'Orange Revolution' - has not only been pushing for Ukraine to join NATO but to again have nuclear weapons bases (as in Soviet days, but this time pointing in the other direction!).

The strategic model for nonviolent conflict includes understanding your enemy, building large groups of activists, a major focus on your communication strategies, demanding elections, running an election campaign and monitoring the election itself as to avoid fraud. It's also all about the branding of nonviolence, making it attractive and saleable to gain support. It does not, however, include much about nonviolent values or how we envision a non-violent society. This strategy can be very effective in terms of bringing down regimes, but nonviolence should also be about what you want to build next. As these organisations say that their work is not political, they are happy to support initiatives that oppose these regimes,

but they seem less concerned about what is to follow.

The focus of the materials produced by CANVAS are all about effective tactics. If you go to the CANVAS site you might be struck by some of the terms they use: battlefield, to explain where nonviolent movements have confronted dictatorial regimes; weaponry, which consists of what they call 'conventional arsenal' -- Group/movement building, communication and action -- and an 'unconventional arsenal' including 'How to act in virtual space' (using the internet) and how to act with limited human and material resources (use of guerrilla approach in propaganda when sending your message).

I question this perspective of 'winning a nonviolent war'. Yes, we do want to make our campaigns successful, but not at any cost. Our final goal is to work to build the society we want to live in, where there is justice and equality. We can learn a lot from the huge experience on developing strategies for nonviolent conflict, but we also need to see its limitations and remember the fundamental insistence of nonviolence on the consistency between the means used and the ends desired. Is what happened after the 'colour revolutions' what we understand by a nonviolent revolution? I don't think so.

Javier Gárate

WRI's revamped website

On 26 November 2008, War Resisters' International launched its revamped website, after more than six months of development work. The site includes a new online Conscientious Objection Information System (COBIS), which combines WRI's co-alert system in cases of imprisoned conscientious objectors, a conscientious objector and activist database, the co-update e-newsletter, and the world survey on conscientious objection and recruitment. The system also includes a permanent Prisoners for Peace list, which will strengthen our support for imprisoned conscientious objectors and peace activists.

War Resisters' International's use of email and the internet goes back to the mid-1980s. In 1987, War Resisters' International started to use email to communicate with groups all over the world, and from 1989 until about 1996 WRI had its own online conference on the APC network, called wri.news.

War Resisters' International's website goes back to 1997, when it started as an online brochure for the 1998 Triennial Conference in Croatia.

In March 2001, War Resisters' International launched its own domain wri-irg.org, which was accompanied by a redesign of the website. The WRI publication "Refusing to bear arms", the world-wide survey on conscription and conscientious objection published originally in 1998, was added to the site in July 2001, originally as a password-protected sub-site. CO-alerts have later been added to it.

The following years saw more additions, and more e-newsletters to be archived on the WRI website. A Wiki was added too.

The revamped website, which has been developed by Netuxo Ltd, a workers cooperative, and themed by Simo Hellsten, now brings all these elements together, and integrates them.

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The Broken Rifle

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If you want extra copies of this issue of *The Broken Rifle*, please contact the WRI office, or download it from our website.

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